

# **Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Person**

**Quarter 1 – Module 1:  
Doing Philosophy**

**Lesson**  
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**Distinguishing Holistic  
Perspective and Partial  
Point of View**

## ***What is It***

Going back to the activity that you did in “*What I know*”, item 5 is the good example of a philosophical reflection: “*Your father went to Divisoria and asked himself why do people spend money to buy things when supposedly these are God given gifts to all*”. Why?

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Let’s analyze each statement.

Item 1: “*Your father went to Divisoria, called your mother via CP and asked her what items he needs to buy.*” This is a kind of simple question that requires simple and definite answer. As such, the conversation ends by providing you the answer. Does it trigger any philosophical reflection?

Item 2: “*Your father went to Divisoria, called your mother via CP and asked her how much the budget is to spend for the items*”. Compared with item 1, this question requires a kind of mathematical computation, so it could be better than the first. However, the question also requires an exact answer. Again, the conversation ends. Does it trigger any philosophical reflection?

Item 3: “*Your father went to Divisoria, called your mother via CP and asked her why it is wise to buy in Divisoria than in the mall*”. This is definitely a kind of high order thinking skill because it requires an ability to compare. When one is engaged into an act of comparing, then he or she is actually thinking. And, this would not provide us a definite and exact answer, as there would be different opinions that would come out from different people’s perspectives. Does it trigger a philosophical reflection?

Item 4: “Your father went to Divisoria, called your mother via CP and asked her why items in Divisoria are cheaper than the items in the mall”. Compared with item 3, this also belongs to the higher order thinking skills, however, it is more challenging because it requires an ability not only to compare but to analyze various perspectives. It pushes us to be more analytical in our judgment. Science actually can provide us experimentally proven ideas why being vegetarian is more ideal. But, does it trigger a philosophical reflection?

How about item 5, why is it considered as a good philosophical question which could trigger a philosophical reflection? Such kind of question pushes us to be critical thinkers. This separates a simple question from a philosophical question. Unlike a simple question, philosophical question does not provide us a definite or ready answer; it is the kind of question that endures or perennially exists because the answer it gets is also questioned making it endless series of quest for truth; lastly, it makes sense of our experiences because it affects our being.

For instance, if you were asked: “**Why are you here?**” What would be your answer? Maybe you would say: “*I am here to study*”, “*I am here to comply with the demands of academic requirements*”, “*I am here to comfort you*”, etc. If such are the answers, the question “why are you here?” is just a specific question pertaining to a particular situation, and not a philosophical question.

How if you perceived that the question: “**Why are you here?**” is used contextually similar to “Why do you exist?” or “Why are you here for?” – A SEARCH FOR MEANING, then, such is a **philosophical question**, and as such will lead you to a **philosophical reflection**. A reflection about the meaning of your life.

A distinction between the universal and the particular will further clarify the nature of philosophical questions. **Particular** refers to a part of the whole, while,

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**universal** pertains to the whole. Example: “**Why are you here?**”. It is “particular” if the reason why we ask this question is due to some challenges or struggles we encounter daily. It is “universal” if the reason why we ask this question is to find the purpose for existing. It means we involve the totality of our existence. We include the aspect of “Who” determines our purpose aside from “What” is our purpose. Therefore, to philosophize is to look at life from a holistic perspective.

### *Three Characteristics of Philosophical Questions*

- a. These questions are often very broad or general.
- b. There is no single methodology for answering these questions.
- c. These questions seem to have no practical utility. They are trivial and general and serve no practical purpose. The importance of these questions lies on other disciplines that emerged because somebody dared to ask these trivial and general questions.

### **How Philosophy Is Defined**

Philosophy comes from two Greek words: *Philo* which means love, and *Sophia* which means wisdom. Thus, we understand Philosophy as a *Love of Wisdom*. Essentially significant is its real meaning which states: *Philosophy is a science of sciences of all things that exist (of beings), in their ultimate causes and principles*

through the help of human intellect (reason) alone.

1. **It is a science of sciences**, because it is a systematic body of knowledge which is not only based on the ideas, theories, and hypothesis but on knowledge that conforms to reality.
2. **Of beings**, because from the point of view of metaphysics, it tells everything that exists, or may exist, of everything knowable. It is therefore qualified as mother of all sciences because of its much unabridged meaning and scope.
3. **In their ultimate cause**, because it tells us all about asking and answering not only the facts and causes but which conforms to reality.
4. **Through the help of human intellect alone**, because Philosophy deals with the human metaphysical reason. The main tool of philosophy is the human reason.

### **Philosophers are lovers of wisdom because:**

1. They are engaged in philosophy and their goal is to become wise. To be wise is to know the truth. (*logic and epistemology*)
2. They are far above the usual people we encounter daily. (*philosophy of man, social philosophy*)
3. They are not swayed by popular views and are not easily deceived. (*politics*)
4. They are the best people to seek counsel from for they see things clearly. (*rational psychology and ethics*)
5. They know truths ordinary people do not know. (*metaphysics, philosophy of religion, theodicy*)

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Looking into the reasons stated above, it must be understood that philosophers as lovers of wisdom are expectedly having a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of everything that exists and that can be known by the intellect. Thus, other disciplines are considered branches of philosophy such as: logic and epistemology, philosophy of man and social philosophy, politics, rational psychology and ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of religion and theodicy.

### **Abridged History before Philosophy**

The ancient Greeks were so engrossed with their myths (*mythology*) about their gods and goddesses to such an extent that in order to please the gods and grant their wishes, they would offer some token whenever they needed some favors from these gods. Around 650 BC, a man from a fishing village in Miletus named THALES started to diverge from the mythological (relating to, based on, or appearing in myths or mythology) tradition and sought to answer questions like: “What is that underlying substance that reality is made of? How do things come to be, change and pass away? Is there something that remains amidst all these changes?” Then Philosophy started. THALES was named as the Father of Western Philosophy. Ancient Philosophy (600 BC – 600 AD) may be characterized as a period that held the cosmocentric view. **PHUSIS = NATURE**) Ancient philosophers wondered about the world (kosmos in Greek). The question that concerned them was the origin of the universe – the **arche** (Greek for starting point). “Where did all things come from?” (Sioco, et. al., 2016).

### **The Pre-Socratics**

Miletus was the ideal place for the first practice of philosophy. As center of trade and commerce in ancient Greece, it became the melting pot of ideas from other cultures in other parts of the globe. It was part of ordinary life to hear people trying to voice their opinion and convince others through arguments. Thus, the Milesians were exposed and became tolerant to different ideas.

### ***The Triumvirate of the three Milesians***

*Triumvirate* means a group of three men holding power. The first three philosophers who gave us a non-mythological account of the nature of reality and the universe without the aid of instruments were Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. They were able to construct their philosophical perspective or reality by merely using their rational faculty together with their ability not only to observe but also to speculate. *They introduced the doctrine that all matters have life (hylozoist=hylo or stuff and zoe or life). They believe that the universe is alive or animate and material (Sioco, et. al., 2016).*

**Thales** was the most popular among the three, being the **Father of Western Philosophy** and was regarded as one of the seven sages of ancient Greece. He was the **teacher of Anaximander**. He believed that the **natural magnet is alive** since it could make an object move. His main idea is that the fundamental substance or primary constituents of reality is **WATER**. He was the first to assume that greatestgreeks.wordpress.com

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the earth is flat, such that when you reach the edge of the horizon, you will fall. While in Egypt, as trader, he became familiar with geometry and brought geometry to ancient Greece. Aside from being a philosopher and mathematician, he was considered as an astronomer because he was credited to have successfully predicted an eclipse. He was able to assume that there must be an **ORDER** in the universe and that the universe must be an orderly system known as the **COSMOS**, governed by laws or logos which could be explained by man through the process of **ABSTRACTION**. He was the first man to veer away from mythological tradition and began to view things in a different angle. His curiosity and thirst for knowledge gave him a different perspective.

**Anaximander** was a student of Thales. He claimed that fundamental substance of reality is the infinite or the **APEIRON** (*it has no precise characteristics or attributes. It is ageless and eternal, and it encompasses all the worlds*). This is highly speculative and abstract rather than based on observation. He believed that the

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**earth is cylindrical** and is suspended **in space**. He was the first philosopher to attempt to draw a **map**.

**Anaximenes** was a student of Anaximander. He concluded that the fundamental substance must be **AIR**. According to him, air holds our soul together, it encompasses the whole world. Like Thales, he went back to the **flat-earth theory**, but unlike Thales who did not give an exact shape of the earth, Anaximenes claimed that the earth and other heavenly bodies are like **saucers floating in air**, thus the

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**earth is flat and round.**

### **Other Pre-Socratics**

**Pythagoras** was also a pre-Socratic philosopher who gave primary consideration on the **nature of reality**. He was the leader of a religious cult, known as the **Pythagoreans**. He claimed that **Philosophy is a way of life**. He believed that religion and philosophy are connected and merged into one. He considered

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philosophy and mathematics as good for the purification of the soul. He gave importance to the contemplative (*involving or given to deep reflection or thinking*) life for this **cathartic** (*n. catharsis*) process of purification. *We are elated when we were able to solve difficult mathematical problems.* He believed that the primary constituents of reality was **NUMBERS**. He coined the word **philosophy** and was credited to be the first pre-Socratic philosopher to use the term **logos** for his cosmology.

**Heraclitus** was known for the mystical nature of his philosophy, especially his idea about change. He believes that the only thing that is permanent in this world is **CHANGE** (flux or becoming). His popular sayings is “*You cannot step twice into the same river, for fresh water are ever flowing in upon you. We step and do not step into the same rivers, we are and are not.*” He was the first

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philosopher who wrote about the idea of change. He used the flames of fire to emphasize the idea of change.

**Parmenides’** philosophical idea is **contradiction of the idea of change from Heraclitus**. He proposed that the only thing that is permanent in this world is **BEING**, that is reality is made up of one continuous object or plenum called **being**. **Change is only an illusion**. Amidst the illusion of change, there is something indestructible, immovable, complete and without beginning or end, which he called **being**. Thus, there is no such thing as change and motion.

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end, which he called **being**. Thus, change and motion.

**Empedocles** believed himself to be **immortal** and that he had **magical powers**. He was known to have cured somebody who was comatose for 24 months. He was the proponent of the notion that reality is made up of the **four elements**, namely, **earth, air, fire, and water**. He was regarded as a **pluralist** (*opposite of monist*) because he had four elements as his fundamental substances

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immortal, he leaped into the mouth of Mt. Erna, an active volcano in Sicily, southern Italy, that led to his untimely death.

**Anaxagoras** believed that there is not just one element that reality is made of. For him, there are **many seeds or elements** as there are kinds of things. **Matter** becomes infinitely **divisible**. Whenever you divide matter, each separated part will contain elements of everything else. Another important contribution was his idea about the **NOUS** or mind which was conceived of as external but is infinite and is self-ruled

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and according to him, “has the greatest strength and power over all things.” This idea had inspired the conception of the characteristics of the **Christian God**.